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General questions: Patrick O'Neill, DHS, 971-673-1282

Technical questions: Paul Cieslak, M.D. DHS, 971-673-1111

Oregon health officials confirm season's first flu case

Oregon's first confirmed influenza case of the season has been reported to the Oregon Department of Human Services Public Health Division, state officials announced today.

The case of influenza B occurred in a Washington County man in his 20s. The patient is recovering.

"Flu has arrived in Oregon and more people will be getting sick from it," said Dr. Paul Cieslak, M.D., program manager for the Acute and Communicable Disease Prevention program in DHS. "This is a good time to prevent it by getting vaccinated. Take advantage of any opportunity you have to get the vaccine."

Cieslak pointed out that the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices has recommended this year for the first time that all children aged 6 months to 18 years be vaccinated.

"We track patients who are hospitalized with influenza in the Portland area, and we have found that children under age 5 are just as likely as people over the age of 65 to be hospitalized with influenza," Cieslak said.

School-aged children are not as likely to require hospitalization, but they do have the highest rates of illness with influenza.

"Routine immunization of all children will help protect others in the community, because as more people get vaccinated, the spread of disease is reduced," Cieslak said.

Oregon has already received influenza vaccine and a record supply is expected this season, Cieslak said.

Vaccination is recommended for anyone who wants to avoid being sick from flu, especially those who are at high risk of complications from influenza or are in close contact with those at high risk. Priority groups for vaccination are:

- Children aged 6 months to 18 years,
- Pregnant women,
- People 50 years of age and older,
- People of any age with chronic medical conditions,
- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities,
- People who live with or care for people at high risk of complications, such as household contacts, out-of-home caregivers of children 6 months and younger,
- Healthcare workers,
- School-age children.

For many people, the nasal spray vaccine FluMist® is a good alternative to the injectable vaccine if they are healthy and between the ages of 5 and 49, Cieslak said.

Influenza symptoms include fever, headache, sore throat, cough and muscle aches. Unlike other common cold it can cause extreme fatigue and loss of appetite lasting several days.

“It can put you in bed for a week – or worse,” he said.

It is estimated that almost 450 Oregonians die of influenza every year; nationally flu kills an estimated 36,000 people every year.

Information on clinic locations and dates can be obtained by calling 1-800-SAFENET or at the or at the American Lung Association of Oregon’s Flu Shot Locator Web site: www.lungoregon.org/asthma/Flu_Shot_Locator.html.

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